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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

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3 December 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: Members of the Special Coordination Committee

SUBJECT: Basic Strategy Issues [REDACTED]

REFERENCE: Secretary of Defense's Memorandum,  
17 November 1980

1. Harold Brown's paper recommending the development of a basic national strategy is a super idea [REDACTED]

2. The strategy recommended is based on two premises:

- a. that the United States has insufficient military power to handle the European, Asiatic, and Persian Gulf theaters simultaneously; and
- b. that a coalition strategy is therefore essential to protect even our vital interests. [REDACTED]

3. The second premise is flawed. Historically, coalitions have been useful primarily in wartime because it is then that the vital interests of the partners coincide. Coalitions have not been useful in developing and executing peacetime strategies. To the extent that NATO has had success in peacetime over the past 30 years, it has only been because NATO policy was so dominated by the policies of the United States that it simply mirrored it. Now that NATO is moving swiftly away from American domination, it will, before long, be a matter of form and not substance as far as peacetime strategy is concerned. [REDACTED]

4. It is highly unlikely that the members of any coalition would consistently agree that what was vital to the United States was vital to them also, except the defense of their homelands. No one would imagine that the Soviet Union would mortgage its vital interests to the voluntary support of the Poles, for instance. If we are willing to place our vital interests at risk to the cooperation of our allies, the world will simply perceive that we do not place as much value on our vital interests as do the Soviets on theirs. In fact, since our European allies have perceived that the U.S. nuclear umbrella no longer was a sure deterrent to a Soviet invasion, they have been less and less cooperative on Alliance matters. The U.S., by a combination of military strength, non-military leverage and perceived will to

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act, must reassume that burden of protection of our, and their, vital interest. This does not mean that we should neglect their contributions to protecting our joint interests, but that we cannot afford to let the Soviets perceive that if they could separate us from our allies on issues vital to us we would not stand up to them. 25X1

5. Where this is of particular import is with respect to vital interests of the U.S. outside of Europe and Japan. What strategy can we have, though, if we do not have adequate military force to handle our vital interests in the three primary theaters simultaneously? We must have a capability to apply the military forces we do have selectively and rapidly wherever they are needed. Complementing this, we should also be able to exercise leverage with our economic power. A strategy built on these capabilities recognizes that the United States is not contiguous to its principal allies (excepting Canada), markets and areas of competition with other nations, and therefore must have the ability to move military forces to areas of immediate or continuing concern and to establish a military presence which can project power, if necessary. At the same time, it recognizes that our economic power can be brought to bear against both the immediate enemy and those who may be providing support to him. Such a strategy acknowledges that we are now unprepared in the Persian Gulf area precisely because of our preoccupation with fixed military strategies in Europe and Asia over the past three decades. 25X1

6. A rapidly deployable military strategy comprises more than the present concept of an RDF. It would depend on two types of forces:

a. Land-based air and ground forces that were lightweight and packaged for self-sustaining capabilities.

b. Naval forces to ensure a line of communication, to secure ports and airfields for the introduction of ground and air forces into a hostile environment, and to project power directly ashore with air or ground forces. The ability to project power directly from the sea with carrier aircraft or marine amphibious troops is the preferred mode under this strategy whenever the requirements can be met from the sea alone. When the opposition is too sizeable for that, they can be used forcibly to secure a port of entry for mobile air and ground forces. Otherwise, we are dependent on having made advance arrangements for bases. While bases are desirable, they limit the areas of potential deployment to those in which we have had the foresight and the ability to obtain basing rights. In addition, base rights are too uncertain politically to be an essential ingredient of our strategy for protecting vital interests. 25X1

7. The ability to project force almost anywhere on the globe is important to us for several reasons:

a. The definition of what will be considered "vital" to us in the future is almost unpredictable. In the past, we have fluctuated from any area where the Soviets were intervening (directly or through

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surrogates) only to areas where the intrinsic value of individual countries to us appeared to be great. We will fluctuate in the future. In defining our "vital interests," we also may need to consider the precedential or "domino" effect of not protecting our interests in some countries of little intrinsic interest. In either case, there may be a wide geographical spread between areas where we wish to project force.

b. It is easy to conceive of conditions in which a rapidly deployable ground force could face superior force, e.g., Iran. The ability to counterattack at some distant point more to our advantage could be important here. "Horizontal escalation" may require that we be able to move ground, air, or naval forces quickly to widely dispersed areas to cut off the supply line from the Soviet Union or its surrogates to governments hostile to us, e.g., points of egress into the open oceans and areas in which they hold advance positions such as Cuba, Libya and Ethiopia. [redacted]

8. What are the non-military elements of this strategy? It is a recognition that one of our greatest strengths is the potential of our agricultural and industrial prowess to exert influence around the world. It is a willingness blatantly to use our agricultural surpluses and advanced industrial technologies to pressure other nations into conformance with our objectives. It is a capability that neither the Soviets nor most other probable adversaries possess. The negative side of a policy of economic sanctions is that it is difficult to execute, and the results problematic. Experience suggests that positive economic inducements are more likely to be successful than sanctions. A full and coordinated economic strategy has never been attempted. Despite the attendant uncertainties, it is a unique American potential that is worth considerable effort to explore. [redacted]

9. The attachments discuss some of the specific steps to move into a strategy of mobile military and economic leverage. [redacted]



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Attachments  
APPENDIX 1  
APPENDIX 2

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APPENDIX 1

Steps to move to a mobile military strategy for the United States in the 1980s:

1. Establish a sense of strategic priorities:

- In peacetime, until there are signs of specific threats elsewhere, the Persian Gulf-Middle East theater should be our first concern for deployment. Any draw-down of forces to provide for this should come from the European theater first and the Pacific second. We bear the exclusive defense burden in the Persian Gulf-Middle East theaters, and our allies in Europe should be made to recognize the impact of our shortfall. Specifically, as many naval forces as necessary would be drawn down from the Mediterranean. This would have minimal impact on the war-fighting capability of NATO. The psychological impact on the Alliance would be alarming, though salutary. Specifically, land-based air, and ground forces presently in Europe would remain there, but only on the assumption that the allies would accede to their rapid deployment to a crisis area when necessary to meet U.S. interests.

- In the event of general war with the Soviet Union, Western Europe would have to call on almost all of our forces from the other theaters (e.g., a return to the Navy's "Swing" strategy). This is similar to our concentrating on one theater strategy of the early years of World War II when our forces were inadequate to do more.

- In the event a vital interest were endangered in any theater, and a decision made to defend it, mobile forces would be concentrated on that problem.

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2. This strategy would establish extensive bases in both Israel and Egypt as forward staging points for land-based air and ground forces. This reassurance for the security of Israel would be part of the price for Israeli acceptance of the settlement with the Arab world from which we would hope to gain greater access to other facilities in the Middle East area

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3. There would be a necessary reorganization of existing U.S. military forces and a remodeling of future forces to fit this strategic concept

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APPENDIX 2

Steps to move to an economic strategy for the United States in the 1980s:

1. The U.S. is totally unprepared to conduct a coherent economic strategy against a specific adversary. The first step in pursuing such a strategy would be to establish a mechanism empowered to coordinate and control economic warfare (including export/import controls, economic assistance, business relationships, etc.). [redacted] 25X1

2. The use of economic warfare in the near and middle term may be difficult and highly dependent on specific circumstances because our economic leverage is limited. However, in the far term that leverage will be greater because, especially in the agricultural area, scarcities will put a premium on resources and in some cases will mean the difference between survival and starvation. [redacted] 25X1

3. Therefore, we should begin now developing both a strategy and the mechanisms to conduct such economic warfare/strategy. [redacted] 25X1

4. Economic benefit offers the greatest incentive to other nations to modify their behavior in ways congenial to our interests. Whether sanctions will work under any circumstances is problematical; any hope of their succeeding depends upon Western and Japanese support [redacted] 25X1

5. Any successful economic strategy will require the explicit exploitation of intelligence to identify opportunities. [redacted] 25X1

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